

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0059

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, KN, KS, BY
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR ROK RELATIONSHIPS WITH BURUNDI

REF: SEOUL 458 (NOTAL)

1. INDICATIONS IN REFTEL OF ROK'S INDIFFERENT ATTITUDE TOWARD PURSUING POSSIBILITY OF AN OPENING IN ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH BURUNDI PROMPT ME TO RECALL HOW WE BECAME INVOLVED IN THIS QUESTION ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO. PERHAPS THE ROK DOES NOT RPT NOT AT HEART MUCH CARE ABOUT THE ANNUAL (EXCEPT 1976) THEATRICAL AT UNGA ON KOREAN ISSUES, BUT THE USG SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERABLY CONCERNED EACH YEAR, AND CERTAINLY OUR AFRICAN EMBASSIES ARE MOBILIZED TO CAJOLE THEIR HOST COUNTRIES TO "THINK CORRECTLY" ABOUT THE KOREAN PROBLEM.

2. OBVIOUSLY, THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES TAKE VARIOUS POSITIONS ON KOREA DEPENDING ON IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS, THE WEIGHT OF PAST POSITIONS ON THE ISSUE, OR THE IMPACT OF PRACTICAL POLITICAL FACTORS. IN BURUNDI'S CASE, THE ABOVE ELEMENTS HAVE

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LED TO AN ALIGNMENT WITH PYONGYANG. I HAVE THOUGHT THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME CHANCE OF BRINGING BURUNDI INTO BETTER BALANCE, BUT THIS CAN ONLY HAPPEN, IF AT ALL, THROUGH AN ACTIVE, PERSISTENT, AND INTELLIGENTLY DEVISED EFFORT BY THE ROK, WITH AMERICAN ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE BEING ONLY A MARGINAL FACTOR.

3. IT SEEMS THAT THE ROK, HAVING SCREWED UP ENOUGH INTEREST

TO MAKE A CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO BURUNDI, IS NOW BACKPEDALING FURIOUSLY BECAUSE IT WAS REBUFFED IN KINSHASA, WHERE IT LAUNCHED THE WRONG TACTICAL GAMBIT OF SEEKING A VISA FOR A VISIT TO BURUNDI INSTEAD OF FIRST TRYING TO OPEN A DIALOGUE IN A SUITABLE CAPITAL. AS FOR THE RED HERRING FROM BELGIAN MOFA OFFICIALS ABOUT BURUNDI'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH TANZANIA ON OVER- AND TRANSPORT ROUTES, THIS HAS NO RELEVANCE TO THE ROK PROBLEM. BURUNDI WILL ALWAYS BE DEPENDENT ON A SUPPLY LIFELINE THROUGH TANZANIA, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT RESOLUTION OF THE MANY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH THAT LIFELINE HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH BURUNDI'S FOREIGN POLICY STANCE ON ASIAN ISSUES. ONE CAN ALWAYS FIND REASONS FOR SAYING THAT IT IS "TOO EARLY" FOR THE ROK TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE WITH BURUNDI, BUT FINALLY, WHEN ONE HAS POSTPONED AND AGAIN POSTPONED ACTION, WE FIND THAT THE UNGA SEASON IS ABOUT TO RESUME.

4. AS FAR AS AID FROM THE ROK IS CONCERNED, IT IS HELPFUL TO LEARN FROM PARA THREE REFTEL THAT THE ROK UNDERSTANDS THE ROLE THAT AID PROJECTS MUST PLAY IN PROMOTING ROK RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN NATIONS SUCH AS BURUNDI. CLEARLY, THE ROK SHOULD NOT COMMIT ITSELF TO AID PROJECTS WITHOUT HAVING NAILED DOWN RATHER FIRMLY THE STATE OF POLITICAL LINKS BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE AFRICAN COUNTRY CONCERNED, SUCH AS BURUNDI. BUT, I SHOULD THINK THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT A GOVERNMENT, SUCH AS BURUNDI, FIRST TO "DEMONSTRATE ITS SINCERITY" TO THE ROK, BEFORE BURUNDI GETS ANY INKLING OF WHAT TO EXPECT FROM SEOUL. AFTER ALL, HOWEVER UNJUSTIFIED ON THEIR MERITS, BURUNDI'S TIES WITH NORTH KOREA HAVE A CERTAIN POLITICAL LIFE AND MOMENTUM OF THEIR OWN IN THE BUJUMBURA CONTEXT, AND IT WOULD NOT RPT CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT BE EASY FOR BURUNDI TO MOVE TO A MORE BALANCED POSITION. INDEED, TO START SUCH A PROCESS IS THE WHOLE PREMISE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ROK/BURUNDI DIALOGUE, AND HINTS BY THE ROK OF POSSIBLE AID (SUCH AS A FISH CANNERY PROJECT) WOULD HAVE TO BE A CONSTITUENT PART OF THE DIALOGUE.

5. IF THE ROK THINKS THAT ITS REPUTATION FOR AIDING ITS FRIENDS WILL IN THE LONG RUN INFLUENCE BURUNDI, IT HAS ANOTHER THING COMING, BECAUSE THE DPRK IS ALREADY IN TOWN AIDING BURUNDI. IF THE ROK REALLY WANTS TO GIVE UP ON THIS SITUATION BEFORE IT HAS TRIED A MEANINGFUL APPROACH, THEN SO BE IT. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE THIS DOSSIER TO BE DUSTED OFF THE NEXT TIME THAT THE ROK AND USUN ARE SCROUNGING VOTES AT THE UNGA ON THE KOREAN ISSUE, SO AS TO REMIND EVERYONE OF THE ROK'S SOMEWHAT LACK-ADAISICAL DIPLOMACY, BEFORE JUDGMENTS ARE RENEWED ABOUT THE "PRO-COMMUNIST" TILT IN BURUNDI'S SUPPOSEDLY NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY.

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